

E 312

8

856

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00003355172









**SONS OF THE REVOLUTION**

**IN THE**

**STATE OF NEW YORK**

**ADDRESSES**

*delivered by*

**EX-SENATOR ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE**

**OF INDIANA**

**ON WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY**

**FEBRUARY 22, 1921**

(Copyright, 1921, by Sons of the Revolution)







From mezzotint by Wm. Sartain, after Coudert, for Sons of the Revolution, 1891

*George Washington*



ADDRESSES

DELIVERED BY EX-SENATOR

ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE

OF INDIANA

ON FEBRUARY 22, 1921

---

AT THE SECOND

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

OF THE

SONS OF THE REVOLUTION

AND OTHER PATRIOTIC SOCIETIES

AT CARNEGIE HALL, NEW YORK

AND AT THE THIRTY-NINTH ANNUAL BANQUET

OF THE

SONS OF THE REVOLUTION

AT THE HOTEL PLAZA, NEW YORK

---

“UNGUARDED GATES”

BY THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

11

© CIA 619736

6 29 10

In 1920, the Sons of the Revolution in the State of New York conceived the idea of holding a popular meeting on the morning of Washington's Birthday.

With this end in view the New York Society of the Cincinnati, Veteran Corps of Artillery, Sons of the American Revolution, The Colonial Dames of America, Daughters of the American Revolution, Daughters of the Revolution, Society of Colonial Wars, Colonial Dames of the State of New York, Daughters of the Cincinnati, and the Military Order of Foreign Wars were invited to join in this movement.

As a result of this meeting, it was determined to make the function an annual one.

In 1921 the Tammany Society, New England Society, Military Order of the World War and the Law and Order Union also joined in the celebration.

This year we were fortunate in having Ex-Senator Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana to make the address. The Senator also spoke extemporaneously at the Annual Banquet in the evening.

At the meeting of the Board of Managers, it was resolved that ten thousand copies of both addresses be printed and distributed to the members of the General Society, Sons of the Revolution, and the other Societies that participated, and James Mortimer Montgomery, General President, Robert Olyphant, President of the New York Society, and Henry Russell Drowne, Secretary, were appointed a Committee to supervise the publication.

It is deemed appropriate at this time to print the poem, "Unguarded Gates," by Thomas Bailey Aldrich, which, through the courtesy of Houghton, Mifflin Company, we are permitted to do.



# Address at Carnegie Hall

By Hon. ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE

*President Olyphant, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

After all, not many merely human events have changed the destiny of the race; and the learned are in dispute as to which one of these is the most important. For example, the Fall of Rome, the Reformation, the Renaissance, the French Revolution, the overthrow of Napoleon, and in our own time the collapse of Germany and the Russian cataclysm, each has its champions for the primacy. So we Americans may, perhaps, be forgiven our belief that the most important merely human event in the history of the world was the founding of the American Nation; and our fervent faith that the most important privilege that can come to merely human beings is the privilege that is ours, of preserving the American Nation, preserving it spiritually as well as in form, in meaning and purpose as well as in name and outward seeming.

From the landing of the Mayflower, the American Nation was inevitable. The Revolution was not merely a peevish incident, due to pique at British imperial policy; the Revolution was the result of profound, irresistible and wholly natural forces that made for a separate, independent and distinctive nation of free men and women working out, on this detached and ocean-bound continent, a scheme of ordered liberty, absolutely new to mankind.

Less than two years after Washington took command, the British Government was eager to stop the war on any terms, excepting only American independence. At the blackest hour

of the Revolution, Washington could yet have had a victor's peace, had he consented that America should remain within the British Empire. To passionate appeals to thus end the war, the only answer made by that captain of our fate was the thunder of the American cannon at Monmouth. So, at last, came the American Nation.

If, therefore, the Revolution was nothing more than an uprising against grievances, if it was merely a struggle for rights denied us as British subjects, the last four years of that epic conflict was a senseless and a wicked waste of blood and treasure; and George Washington, instead of being glorious, was infamous. The American continuance of the war, after the British efforts to end it by conceding all demands except American independence, can be justified only upon the ground that the patriots were fighting to establish a new, a distinctive and an absolutely independent nation. On any other ground, Washington and his associates were little, obstinate men, willing to sacrifice the happiness of a people and the destiny of a race in the furtherance of their insect ambitions; and deserving of the bitter, scathing epithets with which British statesmen, the British press, and the British people thenceforth lashed them.

Redress of wrongs was, of course, the immediate cause—the instant occasion—that set in motion the armed movement against British rule; but in the smoke of battle the patriots beheld that ineffable vision which became their inspiration, sustaining them through suffering, desolation and death—the vision of an America unchained, arbiter of her own destiny and charged with the performance of a separate and a sacred mission in the world.

The military part of his work finished, Washington became the supreme law-giver of his liberated country. It was due to his initiative, steady purpose and compelling influence that the ablest plan ever devised for the co-ordination of stability and freedom, the Constitution of the United States was adopted

as America's fundamental law. He laid aside the sword, yet kept it within easy reach, ever ready to safeguard and defend what it alone had won; for he knew that the man or nation that will not fight for imperiled interests, violated rights or insulted honor, will lose them all and ought to lose them all.

Finally, at the summit of his career, standing on the ultimate heights of experience-tested wisdom, the most august human figure of all time, "alone and unapproachable like a snow-clad peak rising above its fellows in the clear air of morning," as Lord Bryce accurately describes him, Washington gave for the eternal guidance of the Republic the most practical and prophetic chart of national conduct ever drawn by the sagacity and prevision of man—the immortal Farewell Address.

The Mayflower Compact, the Declaration, the Constitution, the Farewell Address—these are the massive and solid cornerstones of the enduring foundation on which the American people have builded their national well-being and security.

The Farewell Address states not only the final judgment of Washington, but also the settled opinion of every one of that company of statesmen who, by his side, strove to establish our Republic and to make it imperishable—a group of statesmen the like of which the world never before saw or since has seen in a single country at a single time. Moreover, Washington's final advice to America was the only policy on which all these unrivaled masters of statecraft ever agreed; on other questions they sharply divided—on this, and on this alone, all of them were in complete and militant accord.

No such unanimity of judgment ever before or since, in any country or at any time, concluded the prolonged deliberations of the councils of the wise—for the Farewell Address was the result of almost continuous consultation for nearly four years, and at a period not entirely unlike phases of that from which the world is now emerging.

The heart of this Decalogue of Americanism is friendship

for all nations, alliance with none. The united conclusion of the founders of the American Republic was, to quote Washington's exact words, that "by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe," we will "entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambitions, rivalry, interest, humor and caprice." From their own bitter experience and humiliating disillusionment, the Fathers, through Washington, warned us against "the insidious wiles of foreign influence" and "the impostures of pretended patriotism."

Every word of the Farewell Address might have been written in 1921, so peculiarly applicable is that great state paper to conditions that afflict the American people today. The gravest anti-American influence in Washington's time was foreign propaganda; it was in 1796 that he declared that "foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of Republican Government." From the very beginning America has been the most propaganda-ridden country in the world.

From the very beginning every foreign government, to the exact extent that its interests were affected, and only as its interests were affected, has sought to use the United States for its own advantage. It is vital that Americans bear in mind that foreign propagandists, no matter from what nation they come, always strive to advance foreign interests only, and never to promote American interests.

Within recent years that ancient process, which so alarmed and angered the poised, fearless and steady Washington, has been renewed with increased power. Presuming on the circumstance that millions of American citizens are of German blood, the German government, before and during the war, spread its evil propaganda through every channel of American life. When, at last, we realized that deadly peril to our national security, we crushed it beneath the heel of a mighty and a righteous wrath.

From that demonstration of American sense and spirit, one not familiar with American history—as, alas!, most Americans



are not—would have thought that, for a season at least, we would be permitted to go untroubled by foreign efforts to sway American public sentiment to foreign uses. Yet, at this very moment, more than ever before, foreign propaganda is busy among us; and with a skill, cunning and resourcefulness born of vast experience and meticulous observation.

At no time since Yorktown, has Washington's foresight been more justified by events than it is today. At no time have we more needed to heed his warning against what he termed "passionate attachments" for some nations and "inveterate antipathies" to others.

At no time have Americans had greater reason to observe Washington's maxim that "the nation which indulges toward another an habitual hatred or an habitual fondness is in some degree a slave—a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its true interests."

At no time has his statement been more fully verified that "real patriots, who may resist foreign intrigue, are liable to become suspected and odious, while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people to surrender their interests."

At no time have the well-being and security of the United States more thoroughly required that every citizen of the Republic shall be American, wholly American, and nothing but American—exclusively American in thought, exclusively American in sympathy, exclusively American in body, mind and soul, heart so overflowing with patriotic devotion that it can hold no other love.

Swarms of foreign propagandists are creeping all over America, delivering lectures, preaching sermons, giving interviews, writing articles, cajoling those deemed influential with American public sentiment. They infest American journalism, are invading American universities, have captured a section of that small but potent group called American "society"—excellent

people, but of the type, familiar to us, whose desire for social recognition in foreign capitals sometimes blinds them to the interests of their own country.

Worst of all, our common schools are being made culture beds of non-American ideas. School histories have been written for our children which not only suppress or misstate vital facts, but actually set forth as historical truths, recent European views of the origin, nature and mission of the United States. Most of our school histories are still fairly accurate, still predominantly American; but some new ones—and an increasing number—might well have been written at the direction of certain foreign governments.

If it be said that such an educational policy is advisable to the readjustment of our international relations, the answer is that no wise or righteous cause requires the falsification of history. For example, a school history for Southern children is in manuscript, awaiting publication, which tells the facts about Sherman's march to the sea; on the other hand, the horrible truth has been printed about the treatment of Union soldiers in Confederate prisons and prison camps. Concede, merely for argument's sake, that, in the interest of a reunited nation, it would be better if these circumstances were forgotten; even so, will anybody contend that our school histories should inform our children that Sherman disturbed nothing and left abundance behind him; or that Union soldiers in Confederate prisons and prison camps were supplied with wholesome food and feather-beds?

Yet this is the theory upon which some school books are being written and printed about the struggle for American Independence and the founding and development of the American Nation. If American parents realized the attempts that are being made through school histories to falsely teach our children parts of the story of our country and thus prevent their exclusive devotion to America, there would be such a sustained outburst

of patriotic public sentiment as would paralyze these efforts to poison, at their profound sources, the very springs of our national being.

Every sensible American wants the most cordial relations with other nations, especially with those who were our comrades in arms during the war with Germany. But those relations must be sound and honest; and foreign propaganda that strives to extinguish the spirit of American nationalism and attempts to jam down our throats the ancient mess of "common interests," dished up in Washington's day and detected and denounced by him, is as stupid as it is outrageous. Such methods delay and prevent the very end sought to be secured by them, since Americans who heartily wish for international good feeling and ardently hope for the coming of what Mr. Beck so eloquently terms the "spiritual empire" of kindred nations, resent such methods and will resist them to the uttermost. All that we ask is to be let alone to develop our national life and work out our national destiny for ourselves.

If the Farewell Address had never been written, still the basic facts of American life today would compel the immediate adoption of the exact foreign policy devised by the founders of our Republic and announced by Washington more than a century and a quarter ago. For if that policy was wise and necessary then it is infinitely wiser and more necessary now.

What are the basic facts of American life today? They are our geographical situation and, even more commanding, the racial structure of our population—a structure which is in startling contrast with that existing when the Farewell Address was delivered. Then we were a thousand times more homogeneous than we are now—contrasted with our present racial make-up, we were then one people in language, blood and origin; today we are a collection of racial groups, not one of which outnumbers all the others.

Today millions of Americans are of Italian blood, millions of

Polish blood, millions of Scandinavian blood, tens of millions of Irish blood and other tens of millions of German blood. We have myriads of Greek blood; and swarms of our citizens came from Russia, Belgium, and the Balkans. We of British origin—I am of Scotch blood myself—no longer are in the majority; and our comparative numerical strength steadily declines.

Thus the American Nation is unlike any other on earth. Our supreme task is to weld our various racial elements into a single people of one blood and one language, with a single national consciousness exclusively American. Any policy that tends to draw our racial groups together is good for America; any policy that tends to draw our racial groups asunder is bad for America. This plain truth is the vital principle of American foreign statesmanship.

That is why any political association whatever, with any foreign government whatever, is as foolish as it is unpatriotic; the moment such an international proposal is even suggested, the welding process not only stops but is reversed; the moment we interfere or even are asked to interfere or in any way mix up in foreign political broils or problems, that moment America's citizenship is divided into hostile camps on purely racial lines—we become a racial madhouse, convulsed by racial fury instead of being a mighty and harmonious nation whose people are inspired by single-hearted devotion to the Republic.

Human nature makes this result inevitable; and existing facts, as ominous as they are obvious, establish it beyond dispute. It is useless to scold, stupid to denounce. America's foreign policy is fixed by fundamental certainties which, for generations, no power in the universe can remove; and that policy is so accurately stated in the Farewell Address, that devout men and women may well see in it the hand of God.

Scarcely a day passes but there are urged upon us international schemes which can be dealt with only by the Washingtonian policy, interpreted in the light of the present racial structure of

our citizenship. Take, for example, the attractive proposal so ardently advocated by many excellent and patriotic people, for the permanent political solidarity of the European allies and the United States. Everybody knows that such an arrangement would be bitterly resented by prodigious numbers of Americans—perhaps a majority; and not only as individuals but as members of vast racial organizations.

We of British descent would do the same thing ourselves if the situation were reversed; and therefore we cannot complain of the state of mind of our fellow-citizens whose racial origin differs from our own. Suppose, for example, these racial groups that oppose permanent American union with the European allies, were to advocate the same sort of connection with their favorite nations. Would we submit to it? Would we tolerate it? No! we would fight it to the death.

Everybody knows that such a matter could not be kept out of American politics; and that immense groups of our citizens would be torn with hatred for one another by purely foreign and wholly un-American causes. Did I say that we all know that such questions could not be kept out of politics? We know that they are in politics this very minute—and never in my life have I weighed my words more carefully or spoken more solemnly than when I say this: friends, unless we Americans immediately return to the broad highway of American nationalism, the time is almost here when our American elections will be settled by foreign and not by American considerations.

It does not require the vision of a seer to behold, even so soon as the next presidential campaign, each of the national chairmen of the two great political parties behind locked doors at their party headquarters here in New York, meeting the heads of great racial organizations and bargaining with those leaders for the mass vote of their members; bargaining on what terms—American terms? No! but on what an incoming administration might be pledged to do with reference to particular foreign countries, or combinations of foreign countries.

Infinitely more important to us than any international solidarity, is American solidarity. American solidarity!—that is our herculean and enduring task, our tremendous, intricate and continuing problem, beside which other tasks and problems are small, simple, transient and fleeting.

Or, take the most incessant demand now made upon us—the cancellation of our war loans, or, by some of the many devices constantly put forward, the extinction of debts due us from European Nations. We cannot solve such a problem by economics only, or by generosity only, or by any of the reasons so skillfully advanced, or by all these considerations put together—not even though some of them, standing alone, were sound. We also must take into account the effect upon the racial groups of which America's population is composed.

Comparison is made of the war-debts of America and of the European nations that opposed Germany, with the war-debts of the States that conducted our Revolution; and we are told that the international war obligations of today must be pooled at the very least. But if that were tried we should have, not the resistance of States on grounds of State pride, State jealousy and State resentment, such as was made to Hamilton's plan; but the resistance of racial groups of citizens on grounds of racial pride, racial jealousy and racial resentment. Moreover, no informed American, whatever his origin, will for a moment admit the historical precedent on which the pooling scheme is advanced.

It is said that we ought, unconditionally, to cancel the war indebtedness of other nations to us, because all fought in the same cause. But is that true? Do the war treaties show that other nations entered the conflict for identical reasons? As to ourselves—did not Congress declare that we made war on Germany because Germany had been and was making war on us—and is not Congress the only power that can declare war or, with authority, state the reasons for doing so?

Upon the ground taken by Congress, the American Nation was united as never before in our history. Would this have been the case had Congress stated the reason now advanced for our drawing the sword? Could the declaration of war have been passed at all, had it been based upon that reason? And what was the understanding of our soldiers?

Go—as I have done from Maine to California—go ask the men who did the fighting whether they went to battle for “world purposes” or to maintain the interests, rights and honor of America, violated, outraged and insulted by an arrogant, ruthless, wicked government. A thousand to one, the men who did the fighting will tell you that they went to war to whip Germany, their country’s enemy, and not to make America the wet nurse of newly incubated nations or the drudge and provider of ancient and conquest-swollen governments. Our men who did the fighting will tell you that they alone would have fought Germany for the sole reason stated by Congress—yes, and any country whatever that assailed America as Germany assailed America.

What would George Washington have done in this situation? Washington was always watchful of American interests only; so was every one of the founders of this Republic. If Washington and his confreres were in charge of the Nation’s business today, do you suppose that they would even discuss the pooling of international debts or the cancellation of American loans? Yet we recognize the difficulty and hardship of payment; and therefore, grievous as the burden of taxation on our own people is and will be in carrying the awful load of debt piled upon them to get the billions loaned to other nations, cannot a method of financial adjustment be found that will recompense us to some extent and prevent much bad feeling?

Consider the following suggestion, offered with hesitation and only as a possible way out; for if some other method is not devised, America’s loans to European nations will never be cancelled except by payment in full and payment in money.

We loaned to Great Britain about \$4,500,000,000, all but one-eighteenth of which she re-loaned to her allies; and in addition, we also loaned to them more than as much again as we loaned to Great Britain. As spoils of war, Great Britain acquired the most extensive territorial accessions in the history of conquest; while the other leading nations at war with Germany, excepting only the United States, vastly extended their territorial possessions—and we are glad they did. Moreover, Great Britain's hold on the world's trade is greatly strengthened, while America's situation as to foreign commerce is desperate.

Great Britain owns most of the West Indies—that chain of islands that guard the Gulf of Mexico; she also owns the Bermudas to our Southeast, and a small but strategic part of Central America, called British Honduras. None of these possessions are of the slightest value to her except as naval stations; and, even as naval stations, they are of no use to her except as bases for attack upon us, which is, of course, unthinkable. But these possessions are worth considerable to us as outposts of defense.

Would it not be wise for Great Britain to reduce her debt by transferring to the United States these essentially and naturally American islands, and her holdings in Central America? Would not such an exchange go far to quiet mutually hostile clamor and to strengthen mutual trust and esteem?

Since the payment of American loans to other governments will be, increasingly, a source of dispute and irritation where only concord and good-will should exist, does not the idea of the exchange of British possessions at our very doors for the reduction of Great Britain's debt to us, deserve the serious consideration of the statesmen and people of both countries?

France, like Great Britain, has a far-flung colonial empire—next to that of her mighty and triumphant ally, the most extensive and profitable aggregation of dependencies on earth, in area much larger than the United States, including all our terri-



tories and possessions. Insignificant items of her colonial possessions are her West Indian Islands, part of the chain most of which Great Britain owns. These islands are worthless to France, but of some value to us—not much, but some. Might they not be utilized, with mutual advantage to France and America, in the reduction of French indebtedness?

As a cold financial transaction, the transfer of these islands to the United States would go but a little way toward extinguishing France's obligations; but would it not be good policy to cancel part of our loans to our sister Republic in exchange for Martinique, Guadeloupe and St. Martin? Would not such an arrangement be far-seeing and broad-minded statesmanship on both sides? Would it not relieve France's monetary distress, raise her purchasing power, and save her self-respect which shrinks from the thought of accepting alms?

These are, of course, only tentative suggestions as to possible solutions of a part of our international financial problem—solutions that might, perhaps, check and reduce irritation here and in Europe, keep down racial discontent among our own citizens, and aid in the restoration of America to that broad, solid and plain highway upon which alone she can successfully pursue her interests and achieve her mission.

No man, no nation can fully live without the purifying and vitalizing power of a great ideal. Such an ideal cannot spring from unsubstantial fancy, cannot be born of artifice, is never the child of hate. It can come only from the heart of nature, only from fundamental circumstances, only from a just conception of that man or nation's true mission in the world. The usefulness to mankind of an Edison or a Shakespeare would have been destroyed had either tried to do the work for which alone the other was peculiarly fitted.

How is it with America? Her people came from many countries, and are blood relatives of many nations. They occupy a continent midway between Europe and Asia, a situation per-

fect either for peaceful intercourse or for defensive war. Nature and Providence have placed us on the throne of the world, beyond and above the jealousies, hatreds and ambitions of ancient peoples, if only we will not cast into boiling and poisonous foreign cauldrons the gifts of God.

Our divinely appointed task is, therefore, to create a new race among mankind—a race compounded of the most virile human elements of the old world—a distinctive race, akin to the people of every other nation, yet unlike those of any other nation—a race that shall be known to the world and to history as exclusively American. Our divinely ordained mission is to develop and exercise, by friendship with all and partnership with none, a moral influence circling the globe, and impossible to any other human power that ever existed or can exist.

So our ideal is America—America the impartial and the just; America the beneficent and the free; America the righteous and the wise; America the fearless and independent; America as planned by our fathers and to be perfected by our children; America the mightiest force for good that ever was or is or will be throughout the earth; America, “among the nations bright beyond compare,” our only passion and our only love; the America beheld in the exalted and, pray God, the prophetic vision of George Washington.

## Informal Remarks at the Banquet

By Hon. ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE

*Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

When President Olyphant was polite enough to write me, asking me to stay overnight and speak for a little while, I wrote back, I thought, with equal politeness, that I would be glad to do so, and thanked him for the compliment; but said that what I would have to say would have to be brief; and he, not to be outdone in politeness, wrote back and said, "That will be all right; the briefer, the better." (Laughter.)

I haven't anything prepared. Your press representative asked me for my manuscript. I told him I hadn't any; that I got off all the manuscript I had in me this morning. It makes me feel like apologizing in the beginning, because I don't like to hear an extemporaneous speech, and I don't like to make one. My observation has been that the extemporaneous speaker seldom says anything, and never gets through saying it. (Laughter.) Very much like the description of the sentences of that great lawyer and statesman, William M. Everett, who used sentences about as long as Henry James. One day, when he was arguing a great railroad case before the Supreme Court, he got tangled up in one of his interminable sentences and stopped and said, "Your Honors will perceive that my sentences are like this railroad—they lack terminal facilities." (Laughter.)

But the fact that I haven't anything prepared ought to give you some comfort because it assuredly saves you from the fate that Dooley said, I visited on the Senate the first time I spoke there. Dooley told Hennessy about that event, and said:

"Then up 'ris' young Sinator Beveridge and proceeded to deliver a few hundred thousand carefully prepared extemporaneous remarks." (Laughter.)

So I told President Olyphant, as I rose here, that in view of the fact that this wasn't prepared, that although I was resolved not to speak longer than two or three minutes, God knows when I would get through. (Laughter.)

I am reminded of the recent visit I made to this town to address the Bar Association of the City of New York. I got to speaking on the development of the American Constitution, that old-fashioned document which, thank God, is coming into style again (applause); and I understand that it has been a matter of considerable debate since then, between members of the Bar Association, as to whether I spoke ten or twelve minutes short of three hours. (Laughter.)

I am tempted to repeat part of the argument of my thesis of this morning, which is the melancholy fact that we are not *a people* in the sense that the French or Italians or Germans or English or Japanese are a people, but rather a collection of racial groups, which is the reason why our foreign policy cannot possibly be what another country's is. But since I am on this subject, I am reminded of an incident that occurred during the war, that may illustrate it even better than an argument. Doubtless you have heard it.

It is the story of an Irish Sergeant who was calling the roll of his Company: "Rocozzi?" "Here!" Check. "DuBois?" "Here!" Check. "Smirnoff?" "Here!" Check. "Schwartzstein?" "Here!" Check. "Flanagan?"--thank God for that good American name!" (Laughter.) Yet all of these soldiers were good Americans; but they naturally get fussed up when the United States mixes up in foreign politics.

Now the eloquent doctor has said that that supreme man, George Washington, who brought about the Constitution more than any other human power, was not satisfied with it. Well,

I suppose that is true. Hardly anybody was satisfied with it. Those master makers of our fundamental law—which they did not draw from any other source that is human!—were not satisfied. But what of it?

“The hand that rounded Peter’s dome  
And groined the aisles of ancient Rome,  
Wrought in a sad sincerity  
Himself from God he could not free;  
The conscious stone to beauty grew;  
He builded better than he knew!” (Applause.)

I am down for a few remarks about The American Constitution. I beg that you shall not be alarmed at that subject. I am not going to speak at length on the Eighteenth Amendment. (Laughter.) And so far as that is concerned, if George Washington was dissatisfied with the original document, I wonder what his state of mind would be today. (Laughter.) The enthusiasm with which that remark is received, would seem to indicate that it has a hidden meaning that we don’t know anything about in the Middle West; and it convinces me that perhaps it was of an eminent lawyer of New York and not of Chicago, of whom the story is told on good authority, that two or three weeks ago, when it was sleety, he was walking down the street with some companions and slipped and fell on his hip. He jumped up and, feeling something running down his leg, exclaimed, “My God! I hope that’s blood.” (Laughter.)

Now of course we have been debating the Constitution for about one hundred and thirty-five years, and therefore I am not going to prolong the discussion (laughter) by any disagreement with my good friend here, although I might point out that of course the “common law” was never adopted by the United States as a nation, but only by the states, and that that very conflict was one of the mighty issues of one of the most important presidential elections that ever occurred in the country. I will say a few words about this Constitution. I am not going to

imitate the theological method to which our friend referred and go into a disquisition about our entire Constitutional theory, but will touch two or three high spots.

There are two respects in which our Constitution (I guess everybody will agree to this) is absolutely indigenous. It is distinctively American, with no other constitutional law or method on earth that in the least resembles it. The first is, in our American Constitutional doctrine the courts have the power to overthrow acts of Congress or legislatures. That has well been called the cornerstone of American jurisprudence. The courts of no other country in the world have that power, or anything like it. And when that greatest jurist and statesman of all time, John Marshall, decided that there must be some power in this country that could say definitively and with final authority what is and what is not law, and that that power should be the courts, the Constitution was amended, and permanently amended, as though precisely that statement had been written into it.

Now that feature of our law has suffered more attack, for a longer period, than any other but one, and that one I shall mention in a minute. From 1800 until now, there has been a persistent, intermittent, but nevertheless never-ceasing attack upon the power of the American courts over legislation—and if any of you gentlemen think that those attacks have ended, you will change your minds before this present decade has expired; I see even now, indications of undoubted renewal of the attacks on our courts.

The argument against this power is old. I must confess, there was a time when it appealed to me. It has been said, and is said now, that this is an autocratic power; that to give judges the power over legislation passed by the representatives of the people is to make them not only judges but also legislators; that such power isn't necessary to the protection of property or of individual liberty, or of the rights of minorities; in

proof of this we are pointed to the omnipotent Parliament of Great Britain, whose acts no court dare interfere with; and we are told to look upon the security of property and the sanctity of individual liberty, and the maintenance of rights of minorities in England, as a conclusive proof that our American judicial power over legislation is neither wise, just, nor consistent with the spirit of liberty. Now that does seem to be an attractive, and, at first thought, an unanswerable argument, does it not?

But think deeper. Friends, has democracy in England yet faced its test? What is it that heretofore has made property secure and the rights of minorities intact, and individual liberty safe in that country? Well, I think all authorities are agreed that it is the prevision, moderation, wisdom, and restraint of the ablest, most far-seeing body of men which ever, in one country, continuously through generations, shaped the policy of an empire,—the hereditary ruling class of England. (Applause.)

Macaulay declared that it was this influence that has always stood between ordered liberty and ravaging license in the United Kingdom. But the English hereditary ruling class is fast disappearing. It received its death wound in 1911, when, under the leadership of that greatest Parliamentarian since Gladstone, Herbert Asquith, the House of Lords was practically overthrown; and while the hereditary ruling class of Great Britain is now dominant in her foreign affairs, its days are numbered in her domestic affairs.

Only a few years—five, or ten at the most—and that restraint will be gone; and then, when the majority can compel the enactment into law of its sudden whim, born of its temporary passion, what then will become of individual liberty, what then will become of the security of property, what then will become of the rights of minorities? When that moment comes (and it is almost here), English democracy for the first time will face its real crisis and endure its real test—and then it is not impossi-

ble that they will wish that they had the American system of just and impartial courts, that shall be above administrations, Congresses, Parliaments and mobs, and majorities, and minorities, and every other human power, to stand for righteousness and justice and liberty and law. (Applause.)

Just one other point of difference. Ours is the only Constitution—and I am just leaving these two points in your mind to-night because both of them are going to be subject to immediate attack; I have named one part of our Constitutional law which is unlike that of any other country in the world that ever existed; I think I am right about that; I will name another.

Under our Constitution, no state, no municipality, etc., can pass any law or ordinance violating the obligations of contract. And again, under the great Chief Justice, in two decisions that were epochal, as critical points in our history as any battle that was ever fought—Fletcher versus Peck, and the Dartmouth College cases—it was decided (and it is our Constitutional law now) that that applied not only to the contract between man and man, but also to contracts between a corporate body and a municipality, or even a so-called sovereign state; that when a municipality, through its agents, or a state, through its duly elected representatives, made a contract with either an individual or a corporation, that that contract was under the sacred protection of the Constitution of the Nation.

That doctrine has been furiously assailed; it has been modified somewhat, but whether wisely only history can tell. There was a time when even I thought that it seemed harsh; and the surface argument against it apparently is unanswerable and most persuasive, especially to the unthinking and emotional. It is said, with immense plausibility, "What! shall corrupt aldermen or corrupt members of a legislature be permitted to barter away the 'patrimony of a people,' and that people to be without redress?" That is a very attractive argument; but go deeper,



search for the foundations of this peculiar and distinctive feature of our American Constitutional law, and what does it mean?

It means this: first that our American idea of economic civilization is founded on good faith, on the plighted word, on the sacredness of contract; second, that the security and justice of our government begin with the citizen himself, at the polls; and that if he be so negligent and careless and ignorant and indifferent as to allow machines or politicians to put into office, to represent him, dishonest or slothful or cowardly or ignorant men, then the citizen cannot escape the consequences of his own act in government any more than he can in law, in a court of justice.

It means that if we want our government properly administered and our public property securely and wisely taken care of, then we who boast of our "liberty" shall exercise it and go to the polls and elect honorable, wise, industrious, well-informed and brave men—and that is the only way to save "the patrimony of the people." (Applause.) The people may not be slothful in the exercise of their own civic duties and then expect the courts to relieve them of the consequences of their own acts. (Applause.)

I was inspired to mention these two things because of intimations that I have heard from time to time, that after all our Constitution is not peculiar, not distinctively American. I could go on for a great length of time, but I am citing these merely as examples, that you may remember at least these two instances where the fundamental law of the American Republic is absolutely distinctive and utterly unlike that of any other law on earth, that ever existed on earth. (Great Applause.)

I have about made up my mind during these recent years that I have been giving all the research I could to the American Constitution and the foundations of the Nation, that after all, with all its defects (and all human things are defective), nevertheless the American Constitution is, as I said this morning, the ablest and the wisest plan for the co-ordination of stability

and freedom that ever has been formed by the sagacity and provision of man. (Applause.) I am convinced that the American Government, with all its defects, is the best form of government that the human race has ever known! (Cheers.)

And as to the Constitution, just this one final word. I don't think I can give the thought to you any better than to relate a little correspondence I had with a young newspaper man in a certain city where I had spoken. He was reporting my remarks before the Bar Association, on the Development of the American Constitution under Marshall; and I had a letter from him. He is a very brilliant young man, just as sincere as he is brilliant, and he said that up to that very moment he had always followed me in the positions I had taken in public affairs, but from that moment he would have to part company with me; that the idea of making a fetish out of the Constitution was not only unreasonable but abhorrent; that neither governments nor Constitutions were divine; that the people were not made for the Constitution, but the Constitution was made for the people; and therefore it must be, as governments must be, subject to any change that is necessary for their welfare—and all that sort of thing.

I was greatly touched and I answered him at considerable length, busy as I was, because I knew first of all that he was honest, and second, that he represented accurately a great and a growing public sentiment now prevailing increasingly, especially among our young men, and I said to him: "Without any argument about these axioms upon which we all agree, let me point this out to you: That we are now entering upon the most serious decade in American history, not excepting that of the Civil War; that you as a newspaper man certainly know that within the ten years which have now begun, we shall hear more extravagant doctrines preached than we have heard advocated since our Constitution was adopted. Perhaps some of the doctrines will be sound; but others will be annihilative, and what

we have to do is to keep calm judgment and clear vision—and how shall we do that? Don't you see, my boy, that there is one thing that is absolutely essential, and that is that we shall have something firm on which we can plant our feet, from which we can take our bearings, from which we can make accurate surveys as to what is true and what is false; some Rock of Ages within whose shadow we can retain sanity—and what have we here in America to answer that essential purpose excepting only the Constitution of the United States?" (Great Applause.)

"Don't you see that that is the reason why, for at least these coming ten years the 'worship' of the Constitution is not too strong a word for the emotion with which we should regard our fundamental law?"

I was made happy when I got a letter back from that young man, saying, "Yes, I see it—I see it at last! It was so obvious and clear that that was the reason I didn't see it. You are right in standing by the Constitution, and I will stand with you to the end!" (Applause.)

Then I wrote him—I must apologize now; I am speaking with more feeling than I usually feel or show. I said, "I am going to ask you to commit to memory these lines, the only immortal lines that Longfellow ever wrote"—and he told me when I saw him last, that he had done it. The lines have steadied me in the midst of many a hurricane. I wish they might be written not only over every fireside in the land, but on the heart of every citizen of the Republic; his lines which I honestly and firmly believe were inspired of God, addressed to the American Nation and the Constitution of our American Fathers. You will recall them when I mention the first line. Longfellow says:

"Thou, too, sail on, Oh Ship of State!  
Sail on, Oh Nation, proud and great!  
Humanity with all its fears,  
With all its hopes of coming years,  
Is hanging breathless on Thy Fate!

“We know what Master laid Thy Keel,  
What workmen wrought Thy Ribs of Steel,  
What anvils rang, what hammers beat,  
In what a forge and what a heat  
Were shaped the Anchors of our Hope.

“Fear not each sudden sound and shock,  
’Tis of the wave and not the rock;  
’Tis but the flapping of the sail  
And not a rent made by the gale;  
In spite of rock and tempest’s roar,  
In spite of false lights on the shore,  
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea.”—America!  
(Cheering and prolonged applause.)

## Unguarded Gates

Wide open and unguarded stand our gates,  
Names of the four winds, North, South, East and West;  
Portals that lead to an enchanted land  
Of cities, forests, fields of living gold,  
Vast prairies, lordly summits touched with snow,  
Majestic rivers sweeping proudly past  
The Arab's date palm and the Norseman's pine  
A realm wherein are fruits of every zone,  
Airs of all climes, for, lo! throughout the year  
The red rose blossoms somewhere— a rich land  
A later Eden planted on the wilds,  
With not an inch of earth within its bound  
But if a slave's foot press it sets him free.  
Here it is written, Toil shall have its wage,  
And Honor honor, and the humblest man  
Stand level with the highest in the law.  
Of such a land have men in dungeons dreamed,  
And with the visions brightening in their eyes  
Gone smiling to the faggot and the sword.

Wide open and unguarded stand our gates,  
And through them presses a wild motley throng—  
Men from the Volga and the Tartar steppes,  
Featureless figures of the Hoang-Ho,  
Malayan, Scythian, Teuton, Kelt and Slav,  
Flying the old world's poverty and scorn;  
These bringing with them unknown gods and rites—  
Those, tiger passions, here to stretch their claws.  
In street and alley what strange tongues are loud  
Accents of menace alien to our air,  
Voices that once the Tower of Babel knew!

O Liberty, white goddess! is it well  
To leave the gates unguarded? On thy breast  
Fold Sorrow's children, soothe the hurts of fate,  
Lift the downtrodden, but with hand of steel  
Stay those who to thy sacred portals come  
To waste the gifts of freedom. Have a care  
Lest from thy brow the clustered stars be torn  
And trampled in the dust. For so of old,  
The thronging Goth and Vandal trampled Rome,  
And where the temples of the Caesars stood  
The lean wolf unmolested made her lair.

*Thomas Bailey Aldrich.*

By permission of, and by special arrangement with, Houghton, Mifflin Company,  
the authorized publishers.







WERT BOOKBINDING

JAN 1989

Grantville, PA

